



**DARK
HORSE
COMICS**
ORCHID

6

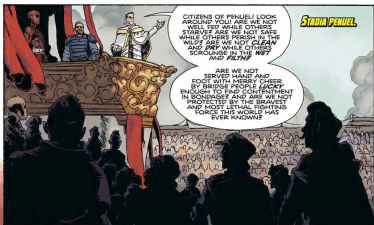
ORCHID



TOM MORELLO

SCOTT HEPBURN

DAN JACKSON



STADIA/PENUEL

CITIZENS OF PENUEL! LOOK
AROUND YOU! ARE WE NOT
WELL FED WHILE OTHERS
STARVE? ARE WE NOT SAFE
WHILE OTHERS PERISH IN THE
WILDS? ARE WE NOT **CLEAN**
AND **PRY** WHILE OTHERS
SCROUNGE IN THE **DIRT**
AND **FILTH**?

ARE WE NOT
SERVED HAND AND
FOOT WITH MERRY CHEER
BY BRIDGE PEOPLE **LUCKY**
ENOUGH TO FIND CONTENTMENT
IN **BONDAGE**? AND ARE WE NOT
PROTECTED BY THE BRAVEST
AND MOST LETHAL FIGHTING
FORCE THIS WORLD HAS
EVER KNOWN?

TODAY, WE
COMMEMORATE
THE **EXTERMINATION**
OF THE REBELLION AND
CELEBRATE BRINGING
TO **JUSTICE** ALL
THOSE WHO HATE OUR
FREEDOM AND THREATEN
OUR WAY OF LIFE, OUR
WEALTH, AND OUR
PRIVILEGE!

TODAY IS
FINAL VICTORY DAY!
THE ANNIVERSARY OF
GENERAL CHEN'S
DEATH!





ON THIS DAY, LONG AGO, I WATCHED GENERAL CHINA DIE! THROUGH FORTITUDE AND SACRIFICE WE PREVAILED AGAINST THE TERRORISTS AND THEIR VILE AIMS!

THEY BELIEVED THEY COULD DESTROY OUR RESOLVE AND FORCE OUR RETREAT! WITH TODAY'S EXECUTION OF THIS MURDERING TERRORIST, WE REJOICE IN THEIR UTTER FAILURE!



IN OUR PERSECUTION OF DISSENT WE MUST NEVER WAIVER OR SHOW RESTRAINT! LET THIS FINAL VICTORY DAY BE A REMINDER TO ALL OF OUR UNMATCHABLE MIGHT, A FINAL CLEANSING AS WE FORGE A FUTURE OF ORDER AND PROSPERITY, OF FREEDOM AND SECURITY OF LIBERTY AND OBEDIENCE!



WHEN THE BULLETS REAP THIS REBEL'S FLESH WE WILL USHER IN A NEW ERA OF POWER AND PLENTY! UNCHECKED AND UNCHALLENGED!



NOW...THE MOMENT AT LAST! TAKE AIM, BRAVE SOLDIERS, LOYAL AND TRUE! UPON MY COMMAND...**READY! AIM!**



WHA...??



























BUT THERE'S
SOMETHING I
MUST DO...



GLAAK

RUN!!



KRACH



KSSSH



WHUMP

HAH!



UMPH!



ARRGHH!
GO!
QUICKLY
NOW!

WHERE?
WE'LL NEVER
GET PAST THAT
THING!

INTO
THE PIPE!
FOLLOW
ME!



LISTEN...ALL OF YOU. I HAVE TO LEAVE YOU NOW AND I DON'T WANT ANY OF YOU TO FOLLOW. TRUST ME. THERE IS NOTHING ANY OF YOU COULD DO TO HELP. YOU HAVE ANZIO NOW AND...

WHAT?!
YOU'RE BADLY
HURT! OF
COURSE WE
CAN HELP YOU,
WHATEVER
YOU NEED...

ORCHID, YOU HAVE ALREADY
HELPED ME MORE THAN YOU
KNOW. BUT YOU CANNOT
SAVE ME. WHAT LITTLE
CHANCE THERE IS
OF THAT...I
MUST FIND
OUT FOR
MYSELF.

NO!
WE'LL
STAY
HERE
TILL
YOU'RE
BETTER
AND...

ORCHID, I
HAVE TO
DO...WHAT
I CAN
HERE...TO...
DO...

OPALI!

SHE
PASSED
OUT!

I SAW IT WITH MY OWN EYES! GENERAL
CHINA RUNNING AMOK IN STAYA PENUELI!
DOZENS, MAYBE HUNDREDS OF
SOLDIERS WERE...


...SLAUGHTERED
LIKE ANTS! AND
IT WAS SURELY
THE LEGENDARY
MASK. THEY
SAID THAT
TOMO WOLF
HIMSELF...

...WAS SPEECHLESS AS THE REBEL PRISONER
ESCAPED AND THE GHOST OF GENERAL
CHINA FLEW OUT OF THE STADIUM
AND DISAPPEARED!

THANK
YOU, MY
DEAR FRIEND.
YOUR PRESENCE
IS ALWAYS
A GREAT
COMFORT.

I DON'T
KNOW WHAT
TRICKERY IS
AFOOT, BUT THAT
WAS NOT A
SUPERNATURAL
SPECTER IN THE
STADIUM TODAY.
JUST THE IDEA
THAT SOMEONE
WOULD BARE...

I HAVE
COME TOO
FAR TO HAVE
MY DAY
MARRIED BY
SOME
CHARLATAN
IN A PAINTED
HOOD!



"FOR I WAS CONCEIVED
IN THE RAPE CHAMBERS OF A
PERFECT CANNIBAL BARGE."

YOU MAY
TAKE YOUR PICK,
GENTLEMEN...




"AND RAISED IN THE
BABY FARMS WHERE THE
CHILDREN ARE FATTENED
BEFORE SLAUGHTER."


"THAT IS WHERE I
CAUGHT THE EYE OF
MADAM HELAH."



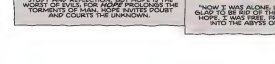
ZHA-HA! THIS ONE KEEPS
ESCAPING FROM HIS BING!
**EXCELLENT SURVIVAL
INSTINCTS, CHILD! EXCELLENT!**



"MADAM HELAH PROVIDED ORDER AMIDST
THE LAWLESSNESS AND TERROR OF THE
BARGE. UNDER HER PROTECTION I
DISCOVERED AN AFFINITY FOR MECHANICS,
ROBOTICS, ELECTRONICS. I ACCESSED
ANCIENT LIBRARIES AND DELVED DEEPLY
INTO THE SCIENCE AND CULTURE OF THE
DEAD WORLD. MY BRAIN WAS AFIRE WITH
REDISCOVERING THE LOST MIRACLES OF
TECHNOLOGY AND MY HEART OPENED TO THE
SUBLINE, THE WORLD OF LITERATURE AND ART."




"I FOUND HER DEAD ONE DAY. IT MAY HAVE
BEEN POISON. SHE HAD ENEMIES. OR SUICIDE.
THE WEIGHT OF ALL THOSE LITTLE SOULS."




"UNTIL THEN I HAD HOPED FOR A LIFE OF
STUDY AND REFLECTION. BUT HOPE IS THE
WORST OF EVILS. FOR HOPE PROLONGS THE
TORMENTS OF MAN. HOPE INVITES DOUBT
AND COURTS THE UNKNOWN."

"NOW I WAS ALONE, UNTETHERED.
GLAD TO BE RID OF THE BURDEN OF
HOPE. I WAS FREE. FREE TO SAZE
INTO THE ABYSS OF TRUTH."



"BUT IF YOU GAZE FOR
LONG INTO AN ABYSS, THE
ABYSS ALSO GAZES INTO YOU."



"I QUICKLY ROSE TO THE ROLE OF ATTACHÉ
DEFENSE MINISTER TO THE BARGE MASTER,
GLETKIN, A RESOURCEFUL BRUTE IN HIS YOUTH."

"GLETKIN MAINTAINED
POWER
THROUGH
FEAR, FEAR
OF A
TERRIFYING
KILLING
MACHINE--A
HUGE, OIL-
COVERED
MONSTROSITY
OF RETRO
TECHNOLOGY,
SIRE VARESH."



"AND THEN ONE
DAY SIRE VARESH
JUST STOPPED
WORKING. NO
MORE FUMES. NO
MORE FEAR. AND
FOR GLETKIN...
NO MORE POWER."

"OF COURSE
I HAD LONG
ANTICIPATED
THE MOMENT."



WITHOUT
SIRE VARESH
YOUR
ENEMIES
WILL KILL
YOU BY
DOWNS.
TSK-TSK
WHAT A
QUANDARY."



"I CAN FIX
YOUR MONSTER.
I CAN KEEP IT
RUNNING. MAKE
THEM AFRAID
AGAIN. BUT
THERE'S ONE
CONDITION."

"YOU
WORK
FOR ME
NOW."

"BUT...
YOU..."

"Sighs
YES. YES...
MY LORD."



"ONCE IN CONTROL, MY YEARS OF STUDY CAME TO FRUITION. SOON THE RUDDER WAS WORKING, THE MAPS WERE STUDIED, I FOUND LAND.




"AND THEN I FOUND A HOME.

"IT WAS DRY, EASILY DEFENDED, THE ROCKY OUTCROP THAT WOULD BECOME HOME TO THIS IMPREGNABLE FORTRESS. I NAMED IT 'PENUEL' AFTER THE BIBLICAL SITE WHERE JAKE VIED WITH THE LORD'S ANGEL...AND THE ANGEL WAS OVERTHROWN.



"NEXT, THE ROBOTICS FACTORY.

"THE TECHNOLOGY WAS RUDIMENTARY REALLY, THE WATERLOGGED PIECES ALL JUST WAITING FOR SOMEONE WHO KNEW HOW TO TURN ON THE POWER. SOON I HAD AN ARMY OF MECHANICAL SERVANTS AND WEAPONS TO TAME WHATEVER I ENCOUNTERED.



"IT WAS A SIMPLE MATTER TO BUY OFF, OR DESTROY, THE LOCAL WARLORDS. THEIR SUBJECTS BECAME MY SUBJECTS. MY LEGIONS GREW. THE REFUSE DRAINED INTO THE SCUM CULTURE BENEATH THE BRIDGES.

"AND THEN I FORGED THE ULTIMATE
WARRIORS, MY *CANNIBAL GUARDS*."

"THEY WERE A TRIBE OF MUTANTS FROM ANOTHER BARGE
AND BIRTHED IN A BABY-FARM SLAUGHTER BIN NOT
DISSIMILAR TO MY OWN. THEY MUTINED, DEVoured ALL
ON BOARD IN A PIRANHA-LIKE FRENZY, AND SWAM MILES
TO SHORE. THEY RECOGNIZED ME AS KIN, AS THEIR RULER."

"BUT THEY ARE TOO
SAVAGE TO LIVE
AMONG US. I LOCKED
THEIR DISTENDED JAWS
TIGHT AND STORED
THEM IN BUNKERS FAR
FROM HERE, WHERE
THEY CHEW THEIR
BONDS IN FRENZY. I
MAY NEVER NEED TO
CALL ON THEM."

"BUT THEY
ARE THERE."

"WAITING."


"IN FORTRESS PENUEL I HAVE BUILT
A SOCIETY IN MY IMAGE. THERE WILL
BE NO LAWLESSNESS *HERE*."

THERE
IS NO FORCE
IN *THIS* WORLD
THAT CAN
CHALLENGE ME,
BARBARAS. AND
NO ONE, NO
ONE, CAN
ESCAPE OUR
WRAITH
WHEN IT IS
LOOSE."

LEAVE
ME NOW, MY
FRIEND. TODAY'S
EPISODE WILL
PASS."

"HERE, ORDER
PREVALES."

"HERE, ORDER
MUST ALWAYS
PREVAIL."

A man with dark hair, wearing a white robe with a yellow sash adorned with a sun emblem and red tassels, stands in a library. He holds a globe of the Earth. The library is filled with bookshelves, a bust of a man, a framed picture of a face, and a can of tomato soup.

"HISTORY IS NOT A LADDER. TO HUMAN WISDOM, IT IS A TREE ON WHICH EACH BRANCH AND BUD IS A PRODUCT OF CONTINGENCY, UNREPEATABLE, UNPREDICTABLE, DEEPENING, AND GROWING WITH THE PASSAGE OF TIME. IN THE SILENCE OF MY PRIVATE CHAMBER, THE ART AND LITERATURE OF MY YOUTH PLAY IN ENDLESS REELS IN MY EVER-RESTLESS MIND."

"I THOUGHT I HAD ERADICATED ANY CHALLENGE. I WAS CERTAIN I HAD ELIMINATED THE UNKNOWN."

"UNTIL NOW."

"NOW I MUST TRUST TO HOPE THAT AN OLD ENEMY HAS NOT RISEN FROM THE DEAD."

THIS SHOULD SLOW THE BLEEDING, BUT SHE'S STILL UNCONSCIOUS AND FEVERISH.

NOW THAT THE STRANGE NOISE IN THE WALL HAS PASSED, WE HAVE TO GET HER HELP!



ALL RIGHT, LET'S GET HER BACK DOWN THE PASSAGEWAY. WESTIN AND I WILL DISTRACT THE CREATURE, AND YOU AND SIMON GET HER AWAY. IF WE CAN REACH THE BRIDGES, WE CAN GET HER MEDICINE AND PREPARE ANOTHER ASSAULT ON--

HOLD ON! THIS ISN'T OUR FIGHT ANYMORE!

AND WHO SAYS YOU'RE IN CHARGE, ANYWAY? OPAL HAD IT COMING, THINKING SHE COULD SINGLE-HANDEDLY DEFEAT TOMO WOLFE'S ARMY. I SAY WE LEAVE HER HERE AND MAKE A RUN FOR IT.



WE ARE *NOT* LEAVING HER HERE AFTER ALL SHE'S DONE FOR US...FOR *ME*! I'D RATHER DIE THAN ABANDON HER!



OPAL MUST BE A *SANIT* IF SHE CAN SURVIVE WEARING THE MASK. CRICHER, THIS IS WHAT THE REBELLION HAS BEEN WAITING FOR, WE *HAVE* TO GET HER BACK TO THE BRIDGES.

I JUST WANT HER TO BE WELL. SHE'S... ALL I HAVE LEFT IN THE WORLD.



THAT *WEAKLING* SIMON AND THE GIRL CAN'T EVEN FIGHT! WE HAVE *NO* CHANCE IF WE BRING OPAL. LET'S CONCENTRATE ON WHAT'S IMPORTANT—GETTING OUT OF HERE ALIVE AND YES, COMPENSATING ME FOR THE LOSS OF FEATHERS!



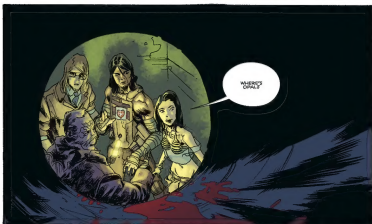
WE'RE STAYING HERE UNTIL OPAL CAN MOVE! THEN WE'LL USE YOUR SMOKE BOMBS TO DISTRACT—

I DON'T TAKE ORDERS FROM YOU! I SAY WE LEAVE NOW! THEY'RE SURE TO FIND US HERE SOON ANYWAY IF WE DON'T—

WAIT...!



WHERE'S OPAL?



SHUM SHUM
SHUM O'REE... SOLDIERS
STILL AND ORDERLY, ARM
TO ARM AND KNEE TO
KNEE, WAITING FOR THE
GREAT EVENT...

...STANDS
THE SILENT
REGIMENT.

**TO BE
CONTINUED...**

THE SHADOW REBEL READER

E-MAIL US AT: ORCHID@LARKHORSE.COM
WRITE TO US AT: THE SHADOW REBEL READER
C/O LARK HORSE EDITIONS, 1036 S MAIN STREET, MANASSAS, VA 20108

To learn more about the world of *Orchid* and be entered to win exclusive prizes, text **ORCHID** to **738674**. You don't have to buy a thing; we're just eager to explore innovative ways of bringing readers closer to the stories by providing unique content, news, and prizes.

Back in issue #4, *Orchid* promised us a fight. Thanks to Opal, I think it's safe to say she's made good on that guarantee.

It's only been a year since editor Sierra Bahrn and I started working on *Orchid*, but it's been an excruciating wait for us—knowing we had a stunning, action-packed issue like this to look forward to. Tom and Scott have really hit their stride, and if you had any doubt that they were going to up the ante in act two, I hope this issue has dispelled it.

But enough about us; let's get to the letters!

Greetings!

I recently acquired the first issue of *Orchid* after a long and heady courtship at my local comic-book store. I go there a lot, and out of the sea of books, *Orchid*'s covers always caught my eye. I had not heard about it before, had not even been abreast of other recent comics, but something about seeing *Orchid* in her headress with her "screw you" attitude and "know your role" scar kept calling to me. I cracked it open, read a few pages, and bought it right then and there.

What I really love is the way it's all set up. I couldn't quite put my finger on it when I first read the issue, but after reading Tom's interview with Geoff Boucher (at the LA Times Hero Complex blog), I realized what it was. I totally agree that both *Star Wars* and *Lord of the Rings* are incredible stories, but their outcomes are inevitably defined by the upper class. Fantasy and science fiction seem to have this constant affair with nobility. Perhaps because the idea of "destiny" seems to stem a lot from the concept of "inheritance," which was primarily something the rich and noble-born preoccupied themselves with—the inheritance of a kingdom, for instance, or a powerful sword. So even stories that began with a peasant ended up being a tale of somehow elevating one's station due to a deeply buried relation. But what about the commoners? What about the people who serve and don't have that card to rely on? *Orchid* seems to take this and throw it out the window! It's great!

And if all this wasn't a reason to love the comic, then what about a tough woman protagonist kicking butt?

Your refreshing take on class is wonderful, and I'm really excited for the next issue! I hope to see some of that "Joan of Arc" that Tom mentioned in his interview!

Wishing you all the best,
Amanda French

We don't talk about our amazing cover artist Massimo Casanvale enough here. The guy's incredible! Thanks for pointing it out, Amanda. Make sure to take a look at the cover to issue #7 below. Stunning stuff!

I'm in love!

I bought issue one when it came out as a pdf. It was only a dollar and looked good, so I decided to give it a shot and I'm so glad I did! I love how strong and varied the characters are. It gives a true view into just how life would be after an apocalypse in the conditions they're subjected to. And I love the creatures! Do you have names for them? My friend and I adore the way the thing that tried to attack Yezus in issue #1 looked and have been referring to it as a "tentigriffon" because it kinda looks like a griffon to me.

Keep up the good work!
Sam

Once again, thanks for sending along so many kind words. See you guys next month for another insanely exciting issue!

JIM

Jim Gibbons
Assistant Editor



The rebels go head to head with *Sire Virell*!
Orchid #7 on sale May 23, 2012.

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